

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OREP (ZABLOCKI)

SUBJ: CODEL ZABLOCKI: MEETING WITH WEST BANK MAYORS,
JANUARY 16

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. CODEL MET JANUARY 16 IN BETHLEHEM WITH SOUTHERN WEST BANK MAYORS WHO RE-STATED DEMANDS FOR PALESTINIAN RIGHTS, PARTICULARLY SELF-DETERMINATION. SUPPORT FOR ARAFAT AND PLO AS "OFFICIAL" PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVES WAS UNANIMOUS, BUT MORE MODERATE MAYORS EXPRESSED UNEQUIVOCABLE ACCEPTANCE OF ISRAEL, THE SADAT INITIATIVE AND A VOLUNTARY LINK WITH JORDAN. BEGIN'S PEACE PLAN AND ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS CATEGORICALLY REJECTED. CODEL CONVEYED THEIR AND OTHERS' MISGIVINGS ON A COMPLETELY INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE. REP FINDLEY SUGGESTED A MORE MODERATE IMAGE BY PLO LEADERS WOULD ENHANCE PALESTINIAN
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POSITION. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING TOUR OF BETHLEHEM SITES MORNING JANUARY 16, CODEL WAS MET BY MAYOR FREIJ WHO PRESSED STRONGLY FOR AN EXTENDED DISCUSSION. SIX CONGRESSMEN (ZABLOCKI, CAVANAUGH, DODD, FINDLEY, GILMAN AND PEASE) AND STAFFERS BERDES AND BRADY ACCEPTED AND DINED THAT EVENING IN

BETHLEHEM WITH MAYORS FREIJ, MULHIM (HALHUL), DAOUD (BEIT JALA) QAWASIMA (HEBRON) AND ATRASH (BEIT SAHUR).

3. AS HOST AND SPOKESMAN, FREIJ PRESENTED AT SOME LENGTH PALESTINIANS' HISTORIC CLAIM TO LAND. WITH UNCHARACTERISTIC VIGOR, FREIJ REJECTED ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS (AS THE SEEDS OF NORTHERN IRELAND-LIKE SITUATION) AND BEGIN'S PLAN FOR WEST BANK AUTONOMY. FREIJ ENTHUSIASTICALLY WELCOMED THE SADAT INITIATIVE, AND STATED UNEQUIVOCALLY THAT ISRAEL HAD A RIGHT TO EXIST "ON AN EQUAL BASIS" (WITH A PALESTINIAN ENTITY). NOTING FAMILY AND ECONOMIC TIES, FREIJ SAID A VOLUNTARY LINK BETWEEN THE WEST BANK AND JORDAN WAS ACCEPTABLE TO MOST WEST BANK PALESTINIANS. HE ALSO SAID THAT WEST BANK COULD ACCEPT DEMILITARIZATION AND PEACE-KEEPING FORCES OF EITHER UN OR NATIONAL CONTINGENT LIKE US OR CANADA.

4. CODEL CONVEYED TO MAYORS CONSENSUS THEY HAD FOUND IN MIDDLE EAST CAPITALS AGAINST A COMPLETELY INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE.

5. CODEL PROBED WEST BANK-PLO CONNECTION IN VIEW OF DISCREPANCIES IN STATED POSITIONS. MAYORS AGREED ARAFAT AND PLO WERE THEIR TRUE REPRESENTATIVES. QAWASIMA ARGUED THAT PLO ACCEPTANCE OF US-SOVIET DECLARATION AND WILLINGNESS TO NEGOTIATE WITH ISRAEL REPRESENTED IMPLIED RECOGNITION. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HOWEVER, EXPLICIT RECOGNITION WAS PLO TRUMP. FINDLEY SUGGESTED TIME HAD COME FOR THAT TRUMP TO BE PLAYED.

6. MAYORS AGREED SEPARATE ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN PEACE WOULD BE MORTAL TO PALESTINIAN CAUSE, BUT DIFFERED ON ITS PROBABILITY. FREIJ WAS CONVINCED SADAT WOULD FINALLY SIGN A SEPARATE PEACE IF THAT WAS ALL HE COULD GET, BUT OTHERS DISAGREED.

7. RECOUNTING SOME CODEL MEMBERS' MEETING WITH ARAFAT, FINDLEY SAID HE HAD BEEN IMPRESSED WITH THE PLO LEADER'S MODERATION WHICH HE HAD NOT EXPECTED. HOWEVER, FINDLEY SUGGESTED PALESTINIAN LEADERS' REVOLUTIONARY POSTURING (GUNS AND UNSHAVEN FACES) ONLY HURT THEIR CAUSE.

8. COMMENT: WEST BANKERS PRESENT REPRESENTED WIDE SPECTRUM OF LOCAL OPINION. IT IS SIGNIFICANT, THEREFORE, THAT NO SERIOUS SPLITS APPEARED AND THAT CREDIBLE NATIONALISTS LIKE QAWASIMA AND MULHIM WOULD AT LEAST TACITLY ACCEPT FREIJ'S VERY MODERATE EXPOSITION. CLEARLY EVEN FOR THESE "MODERATE PALESTINIANS" BEGIN'S AUTONOMY PLAN DID NOT BEGIN TO OFFER AN ACCEPTABLE DEGREE OF PARTICIPATION IN

PALESTINIAN SELF-DETERMINATION OR A TEMPTATION TO ABANDON
THE PLO. INDEED, IN MERELY PUTTING IT FORWARD, THE ISRAELIS
SEEM TO HAVE CLOSED WEST BANK RANKS SPLIT BY THE SADAT
INITIATIVE.
NEWLIN

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